

ABSTRACT

A system and method are provided to couple tunnel servers to tunnel clients executing host applications for use in a virtual private network (VPN) environment. A receiver receives requests from host applications executing on the tunnel clients. The requests are addressed to the tunnel coupling system to establish a VPN tunnel. A processor processes the requests and an indication of loads on the tunnel servers to establish the VPN tunnels by designating at least one of the tunnel servers to each requested tunnel. A tunnel traffic distributor distributes tunnel traffic to the tunnel servers based at least part on the designations. In additional aspects, an evaluation processor evaluates the tunnel traffic before the tunnel traffic distributor distributes the tunnel traffic to the tunnel servers. For example, the evaluation performed by the evaluation processor includes at least performing security functions on the tunnel traffic. In yet another aspect, the request processor establishes the VPN tunnel by, in part, associating each VPN tunnel with characteristics of tunnel traffic for that VPN tunnel, and the tunnel traffic distributor operates in part based on the associations, without involvement of the host applications.